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RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 7731
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 9835
RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 2553
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 3779
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UNCLAS TEL AVIV 000405

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR X0XX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
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ROME FOR MFO

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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

[1](#)1. Mideast

[1](#)2. Iran

Key stories in the media:

All media reported that on Sunday night 35 right-wing activists, including National Union Knesset Member Michael Ben-Ari, illegally entered Jericho, prayed at the ancient NaQaran synagogue, and placed

an Israeli flag on its roof. There were arrested yesterday by security personnel. Media quoted the IDF as saying that the action was a Qtotally unnecessary provocation that risked lives.Q This morning Israel Radio reported that the police released all the militants, except a minor.

The media continued to highlight the aftermath of the assassination of senior Hamas operative Mahmoud al-Mabhouh in Dubai on January 20.

The European Union is expected to issue a statement Monday condemning the use of European passports -- some of them forged -- during the operation. HaQaretz quoted a senior European diplomatic source as saying that the statement will not directly cite Israel, nor is it expected to link Israel with the assassination or the forging of passports. The diplomat was quoted as saying that EU ambassadors had been summoned for consultations by Foreign Ministry officials in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates. During the meeting, Abu Dhabi officials requested that EU foreign ministers, who will convene in Brussels today for a conference, issue a communiqu over the use of European passports in the Mabhouh operation. The UAE is also demanding an explicit EU statement supporting the Emirates' authorities who are investigating the case. HaQaretz quoted the European source as saying that the UAE Government did not blame Israel for carrying out the assassination nor did it request that Israel be cited in the EU statement. The source added that senior officials from Germany, France, Britain, Ireland, and the EU met yesterday to agree on the language of the statement. Ireland is advocating the ardest line among all EU members by demanding tht the statement explicitly refer to Israel. Isral Radio quoted a senior Israeli diplomatic source as saying that the Dubai incident is not likely to affect Israeli-European relations. Media reported that FM Avigdor Lieberman will come to Brussels today to Qface tough questions from his EU counterparts. Aside from Irish FM Micheal Martin, he is also scheduled to meet with British Foreign Secretary David Miliband, who has requested clarifications over whether Israel is responsible for the assassination. Israel HayomQs top story consists of an op-ed by its senior columnist Dan Margalit who affirms that all countries intelligence branches use forged passports. Maariv reported that Hamas is looking for a mole.

Yesterday Maariv reported that the Israeli Government is dispatching Bank of Israel Governor Stanley Fischer to China in order to explain the necessity of imposing sanctions on Iran. The newspaper quoted an Israeli diplomatic source saying that the character of sanctions being economic, Fischer might have a real influence on the Chinese decision. Yediot wrote that Vice PM Moshe QBoogieQ YaQalon will lead the Israeli delegation to Beijing. Leading media reported that Russia has eventually decided to abide by its commitment to sell Iran S-300 anti-aircraft missiles.

PM Benjamin Netanyahu was quoted as saying in an interview with Ari Shavit of HaQaretz that there are signs that the Palestinians have started to climb down the tall tree of intransigence and that the negotiations will be able to resume in the near future.

HaQaretz reported that Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad told a senior figure from the Persian Gulf that bombing Israel with a nuclear weapon will kill more Palestinians than Israelis. He was further quoted as saying that the nuclear capability of the U.S. and Israel can annihilate Iran and that it is therefore illogical for Iran to acquire nuclear weapons.

The media quoted PM Netanyahu as saying yesterday that the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron and RachelQs Tomb on the outskirts of Bethlehem will be included in the list of national heritages sites slated for preservation. While right-wing politicians applauded the PMQs move, left-wing legislators condemned it. HaQaretz and other media quoted Meretz Chairman Haim Oron as saying: "This is another attempt to blur the lines between the State of Israel and the occupied territories. Just a little pressure from the right and Netanyahu immediately toes the line. This decision casts the Prime Minister's Bar-Ilan University declaration of two states for two peoples in a ridiculous light." In another development, media reported that Peace NowQs Secretary-General sent a protest letter to Netanyahu over the Information and Diaspora MinistryQs planned campaign to turn Israeli tourists abroad into goodwill ambassadors for their country, which the group says contains propaganda contradicting IsraelQs commitments in the peace process and the

two-state solution.

The Jerusalem Post reported that U.S. Congressman Eliot Engel (D-NY) told the newspaper that President Obama's decision to reappoint an ambassador to Syria was a mistake. Engel was the sponsor of a 2003 bill calling for sanctions against Syria if it does not end support for terrorism and leave Lebanon.

Electronic media reported that last week Palestinian security forces delivered to Israel a Qassam rocket that had been assembled in a West Bank village. The rocket was ready for launch. Intelligence on the matter was obtained by the PA.

The media reported that early on Sunday an improvised explosive device was thrown at the Shaare Shamayim synagogue in Cairo, causing no casualties or damage. HaQaretz quoted Israel's Ambassador to Egypt, Yitzhak Levanon, as saying that based on what was told by local authorities, there was no certainty the synagogue was the target.

The Jerusalem Post quoted Israeli officials as saying a French recognition of a Palestinian State -- as hinted Sunday by French FM Bernard Kouchner in an interview with the French magazine Le Journal du Dimanche -- would hurt chances of talks with the Palestinians.

The Jerusalem Post reported that a senior Israeli Foreign Ministry official told the daily yesterday that the pro-peace lobby J Street lied about an alleged boycott by Deputy FM Daniel Ayalon of the congressional delegation it recently brought to Israel and about Israel apologizing to the group for the slight.

Last night Israel TV reported that a huge banner was displayed in Turkey -- showing President Shimon Peres bowing to Turkish PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan in a reminder of the low chair incident in Jerusalem. Maariv quoted Israeli diplomatic sources as saying this is a bothering and revolting scandal.

Maariv reported that Rafael Advanced Defense Systems, Ltd will set up a joint venture for developing advanced missile systems with a government-owned Indian company, Bharat Electronics Ltd.

All media reported that Israel's public broadcasting service is in crisis. In early January Israel Broadcasting Authority (IBA) management decided on a series of unprecedented cuts. Today Maariv front-paged an appeal by prominent journalists from the commercial stations Channel 2-TV and Channel 10-TV to save public broadcasting.

Israel Hayom reported that PM Netanyahu is expected to intervene in the IBA crisis.

The media reported that ultra-Orthodox politician Rabbi Menachem Porush passed away yesterday at the age of 94. He served as an Agudat Yisrael parliamentarian from 1955 through 1994 and as a Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Welfare in the 80s and 90s.

HaQaretz reported that according to a new Gallup poll released over the weekend, Israel ranks fifth among the countries viewed most favorably by Americans, behind Canada, Great Britain, Germany, and Japan. Israel is the only country that received more favorable views from Republicans. The PA, in contrast, received more support from Democrats.

1. Mideast:

Block Quotes:

I. QStart a Secret Track with the Palestinians

Former Meretz leader, former Justice Minister, and chief Israeli promoter of the Geneva Initiative, Yossi Beilin, wrote in the independent Israel Hayom (2/22): QSince proximity talks are cumbersome and problematic to all sides, it is important that Israel and the Palestinians enter a direct and secret track that will include true discussions while the elder Senator [U.S. Envoy George Mitchell] shuttles between the hotels of the delegations. If someone is seriously interested in the positions of the other side and if someone intends to push the diplomatic process forward, not just to prove to Obama that he is behaving, this is the only way. The Turkish road [i.e. the indirect track] had better be left empty.

II. QThe Shalit Syndrome

Senior op-ed writer Akiva Eldar commented in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (2/22): QThe Mabhouh case has knocked the bottom out of the argument that Israel will be safer if the worst of the freed terrorists are exiled to Damascus as part of a deal for Shalit. The huge effort put into assassinating Mabhouh in Dubai and the diplomatic and security risks -- surely calculated ones -- taken by whoever did it are indications of the man's standing in the world of terrorism. Exile, it transpires, can be an ideal hothouse for breeding arch-terrorists.... Assassinating exiled terrorists will not defeat Hamas and thwarting a prisoner exchange will not have a long-term impact on the balance of power in the Palestinian territories. The right way to tackle Hamas is to create a real political alternative to its violent and uncompromising course. In the absence of such an alternative, operations taken from James Bond movies that the foreign media attribute to Israel make this country look like a neighborhood thug and divert attention from the specter of apartheid crouching at the gate.

III. QA Duty to Protest

Ha'aretz editorialized (2/22): QSome 1,000 people took part in last Friday's demonstration against the separation fence in the village of Bil'in west of Ramallah, marking the fifth anniversary of weekly protests at the site.... Bil'in has become a symbol of a civic struggle devoid of terrorism. Such persistent, ongoing protest action is remarkable.... Actually, last Friday's rally was relatively peaceful: the presence of Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad and numerous journalists made the IDF and Border Police behave less violently than usual. Only when the protesters began causing damage to the barrier itself did the security forces react, but even then they used riot-control measures rather than firearms. This is how it ought to be, every Friday. The protests in Bil'in are legitimate. They must be allowed. Protesters must be permitted unobstructed access to the site and so should security forces, as long as they act with restraint. Shooting at demonstrators -- as has happened in Bil'in all too often -- is an act perpetrated by only the most nefarious regimes. Protesting in Bil'in is not just a right. It is a duty.

IV. QWho Is Stymieing Economic Projects in the PA?

Regional Development Minister and former Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom (Likud) wrote in Israel Hayom (2/21): QConstruction of the new Palestinian city to the north of Ramallah, Rawabi, is advancing at present. This is the Palestinian Authority's flagship project in the realm of civil development.... Contrary to reports, Israel has not stymied progress on this important project. Israel has declared on numerous occasions that it regards economic peace as an important component on the way to political peace. The gain that will be accrued by the Palestinian citizen from economic cooperation is most important for advancing the political peace process. Improving the quality of life there will help reduce the advantages of clashes, will promote moderation, will allow for the gradual construction of trust, and will provide a horizon of hope. Economic cooperation will contribute not only to the creation of trust, understanding, and cooperation in other areas. At the end of the day, that cooperation serves as a generator of growth. We are doing our utmost, but continued advancement of the project is contingent upon

the Palestinians and the developer.... We have no conflict with the Palestinians, but only with their leadership. We try to draw a distinction and to remain firmly committed to our political, security, and settlement principles, while allowing the Palestinians to lead normal lives. But for the Rawabi project, like many others that we are trying to promote, it takes two to tango. Unless the Palestinians make a courageous strategic decision to be in touch with us so as to promote projects whose purpose is to improve the Palestinian economy, we are going to continue to run into obstacles.

It is a shame that while there are some people who work hard to make something, there are others who work equally hard to destroy. We look forward to finding a solution in the near future to the problem of the access road [to Rawabi].

IV. QOut of Date and out of Touch

The Director of the Interdisciplinary Center's Global Research in International Affairs Center, columnist Barry Rubin, wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (2/22): QAnyone who actually lives in Israel knows -- whether they like it or not -- that Israel is ready to make big concessions and take reasonable risks to achieve peace. They know, whether or not they agree, that the overwhelming majority is ready to accept an independent Palestinian state, as long as it is willing to end the conflict and live side by side in peace. Outside Israel, far fewer people understand this reality. And that includes journalists, academics, and politicians. If they address the issue at all, they presume that Israel is asking the Palestinians to make some huge or unreasonable concession. Often, as noted above, their understanding of Israeli views is more than 20 years out of date.... But the Palestinians especially and Westerners generally know even less about Israel's own demands.... These include security guarantees, non-militarization of a Palestinian state, an end to the conflict, and the resettlement of Palestinian refugees in Palestine. The above observations can produce a simple definition of the difference between moderates and radicals. The radicals, both among the Palestinians and their Western sympathizers, know -- even if they pretend otherwise -- that they want all the land from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea along with Israel's elimination. This is true whether they seek it through a two-stage process, the dispatch of a million or two Palestinians to Israel in a peace agreement, a one-state solution, or a temporary binational state. Consequently they are indifferent to what Israel actually offers except to distort it for propaganda purposes. A moderate is someone who actually thinks the Palestinians today want a two-state solution and is genuinely fooled by the ploys outlined above. Consequently, the moderates -- few as they are among Palestinians, more numerous in the West -- can have the facts explained to them. But the radicals know precisely what they are doing and don't care about any chance for compromise.

12. Iran:

Block Quotes:

QThis Will Be a Historic Moment

Eytan Haber, veteran op-ed writer and assistant to the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, opined in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (2/21): QBibi Netanyahu and Ehud Barak, whom even their current political opponents view as experts, as opposed to IDF Chief of Staff [Gabi Ashkenazi], who may be quite right in depositing the final decision [about attacking Iran] at their feet, cannot look back and look for someone upon whom to rely for making that decision -- for better and for worse, they are the ones. To envy them, one must be from another planet.

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